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## 18. THE WAITING BEGINS: BE THE PERSON YOU WANT TO MEET

You've carefully thought through your "wish list" for that perfect mate. This time, however, you are actually considering which characteristics and interests your special someone must have. You are consciously thinking about the "must haves" on the one hand, and "deal breakers," on the other. You allow your head to do more of the searching for once, rather than letting your heart run wild as you did in the past. After all, that's part of the reason you find yourself where you are today.

Good for you. You're about to experience a time of positive change in a new direction. A time to, once and for all, break the patterns of the past. Upon reflection, you may have been locked in a cycle of behavior that caused you to jump from one unhappy or even toxic relationship to another.

A week goes by. A month and then two. It seems your prince/princess has been delayed in traffic. Stuck somewhere on the highway of life. Don't they just show up on your doorstep? It wasn't supposed to be this way. We live in a world of instant gratification. A TV show runs through a full plot in only one hour. Why isn't this working? OK, I'll give it one more month, and then I'll fall into total despair!

This may be a news flash, but you are not the only person in the universe. There are higher powers at work than you and you are not in charge. While I believe in the power of personal intention, the timing of it is beyond your control. And, for your plan to succeed, there is one more element that must be present.

That element is: You must first be the person you want to meet. That's right – in order for this wonderful person to find you and connect, you must be that person first. You must possess and live the very characteristics that you are looking for. On a sheet of

paper, write down the characteristics you desire. Now, go through the list and apply each to yourself. In order for you to find an honest person, you must be honest. If you want "kind, caring and considerate," then you must live those attributes. How do you treat people you don't know, such as sales clerks or wait staff? Are you kind to animals? Do you return your grocery shopping carts? Ouch. Sounds like we all have a lot of work to do.

The time spent waiting becomes a critical time of reflection and introspection. What are your good qualities? What are your "not so good" qualities? What do you need to do to improve your mind, body and spirit? This is a period in which your "goal a day" plan should be kicked into overdrive. You know what the plan looks like. Eat less. Exercise more. Complain less. Be more grateful for the blessings in your life. Be thankful for the little joys of life. Smile. Rediscover and reconnect with your religion. Read self-help books and seek counseling in order to figure out what events in your past have propelled you down the wrong path today. Make new choices that will lead you to be the person you want to meet. The upside: you will feel fabulous and radiate positive energy that will be attractive to everyone with whom you come in contact.

I have another silly theory to share. After a divorce or end of a serious relationship, the natural tendency is to rush into the next one. Rarely is that good for you. It's important to take time to assess what went wrong and how you and your actions contributed to it. It's also a numbers game. You need to meet a lot of people to get a good idea of what you want, what's good for you and what's not. So, my theory is that the first few people you meet immediately after the end of a serious relationship are like waffles. For whatever reason, the first few waffles are never any good. They need to be prepared, only to be thrown away. Beginning with the third, the waffles are good and can be enjoyed!

LESSONS LEARNED LATE:

- Good things take time.
- Rebound relationships are like waffles: the first few are never any good.
- You are neither in charge nor in control.
- Be a victor, not a victim.
- Be the person you want to meet. Be the treasure you want to find.
- List the characteristics and apply them to yourself (this will surely cut your list in half!).
- Time spent waiting can be some of the most productive and dynamic in your lifetime.
- Change starts with one small step in a different direction.
- Unwrap the gifts you've been given. Daily. Alone.
- Love yourself.
- Would you rather be alone and emotionally healthy or stuck in an unhealthy relationship, with perpetual struggles?

## 19. THIS IS THE ONE (BUT THE WARNING SIGNS ARE FLASHING)!

You've just met a special someone and you're convinced this is "the one." It was love at first sight and you've been together constantly. Cupid shot his arrows and simultaneously hit you both squarely in the heart. You think about this person twenty-four/seven and are overpowered by the "love drug." You want to spend every waking moment together, and when you're apart, your heart aches. You've stopped seeing your friends and cut off contact with the outside world. You don't have time to chat and have little interest in sharing stories with your friends. You are blinded by love. By any measure, your life is perfect, intoxicating, in fact. You're so blissful you could kiss the mailman. If only it could stay this way forever.

While still in the throes of bliss, you notice certain "flaws." Your soul mate may be rude to a sales clerk. She may not be kind to animals. He may display flashes of anger for no apparent reason. She may "cut in line," or insist on being "right." He may be disrespectful or dismissive of your feelings and start to be jealous and controlling. While otherwise calm, his attitude totally changes when he gets behind the wheel, displaying "passive/aggressive" behavior. The warning lights are flashing and the only question is are you paying attention? Are you on the lookout for these familiar warning signs that have appeared in the past? Chances are, your friends have noticed and are there to help you, if you'd only ask. They'd tell you this person does not share your values and "is not good for you." Has this happened to you? Is this the beginning of a country and western song?

There are things that happen in life (repeatedly, it seems) that I can't explain but I know are true. In the context of relationships, I believe it works like this. If you experienced trauma in your childhood (and most of us did), you will have an almost unconscious drive

to find relationships that repeat the dysfunction. You will pursue or attract relationships that are not healthy for you. If your father was an alcoholic, you will likely seek out and find that personality in your adult relationships. If you were emotionally abused as a child, chances are you will find that drama replayed again. If you wished someone had “saved” you as a child, you may seek a mate who “needs” to be saved. If your mother and father had a difficult relationship, you are likely inclined to repeat their dysfunctional behavior. Looking back, was your family locked in a cycle of co-dependency? Are you seeing signs of a repeat? Again, I can’t explain why this happens and will leave the “cause and effect” analysis to the experts.

I believe that a person’s patterns of the past, developed in childhood, will be repeated until that person comes to terms with them. The same relationships, the same patterns of behavior, will be repeated in adulthood, until a person “comes to grips” with the underlying cause and “once and for all” deals with it. There’s an elephant in the room, the saying goes, and rather than ignore it (it will never go away), you need to address it head on. Acknowledge the problem, admit it, and resolve to act in a new and different way. When you do, you’ll be liberated from the shackles of the past. You’ll be rewarded with a wonderful life lived well and a future well lived.

I imagine that we each have a door that leads to a dark room. That room holds our secrets of the past, the ones we want to avoid at all costs. You hold the keys and can open that door anytime you want. But opening the door takes courage and a belief that the pain of dealing with those problems is “worth it.” In order to open the door, you must be convinced that there awaits, on the other side, the joy and pleasure of a wonderful new life. When will you open your door? That’s hard to predict. Ultimately, you’ll do so when the pain of living with these problems is worse than the emotional pain you believe you’ll experience when you face your past. When the pain of life is greater than the perceived pain of recovery.

Get busy and put a stop to your dysfunctional relationship cycles of the past. Get help. You don’t have to live this way. Buy

some self-help books and get started. Find a therapist and make an appointment. Attend “recovery” meetings and discover you are not alone. You have a fabulous life of grace and gratitude waiting for you. You have loved ones who are waiting for your abundant love. You have smiles waiting to be given and received. And when you do find your “healthy” soul mate, you’ll be ready to chart a new course for your relationship. Imagine the joy such a “healthy” relationship would bring!

I have one other “sobering” thought to share (pun intended). If you find yourself attracted to others with addictive behaviors (or if you are in such a relationship), a word of caution. I’m no expert and I’ve not done the research, but I believe a relationship with a mate with addictions is destined to fail for at least three reasons. First, neither of you will understand the other. The person with the addictions is controlled by a higher force, the addictive craving, and is incapable of putting that aside to discuss issues of reason, rationality, truth and accountability. The non-addictive person believes that the other person sees life as they do. This includes the ability to rationally think things through, understand the consequences of one’s actions (and the impact those actions have on others) and to change. The non-addictive person believes that, given time, you’ll change and life will return to normal. It’s simple, just like any other problem in life. In short, there are two people who have diametrically opposed views of the world and their relationship. Second, a life of addiction is exhausting because the object will never satisfy the desire. Each day, an addicted person runs off in the pursuit of something that will always be beyond reach. Third, I don’t believe addictions come in “ones.” I don’t think a person has just one addiction in their personality. This makes dealing with it and overcoming it all the more daunting.

## THINGS I WISH I KNEW

### LESSONS LEARNED LATE:

- This is “the one” but your relationship warning lights are flashing.
- Does he/she respect you and share the same values (or not)?
- Is this relationship a repeat of your dysfunctional past?
- Chances are, your friends have noticed and can give you a “reality check.” They’ve seen the cycles of your past.
- Have you acknowledged the “elephant in the room?”
- There’s a door that leads to a dark room holding the emotional secrets of your past.
- You hold the key and can open it whenever you want.
- Stop repeating your predictable relationship patterns.
- Get the help you need to open your door and “once and for all” resolve your past.
- Throw the key away.
- Discover the joy of a healthy relationship.
- You have a fabulous life of grace and gratitude waiting for you.
- You have loved ones who are waiting for the joy of your abundant love.